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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 000400

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ADDING "CLASSIFIED BY" STATEMENT

CAIRO POL FOR MAXSTADT  
LONDON FOR GURNEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/25/2013  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PINS](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: BATAGARAWA REFUSES TO COMMENT ON BENUE  
TRANSFERS/RETIREMENTS

REF: ABUJA 205

CLASSIFIED BY AMB JETER, REASONS 1.5 B & D

1. (C) During a February 20 meeting with Ambassador Jeter, Minister of State for Defense (Army) Lawal Batagarawa refused to comment on the veracity of GON claims that officers associated with the October 2001 Benue massacre were transferred, retired or otherwise relieved. When the Ambassador tried to raise the issue, Batagarawa said he would not discuss it and asked the Ambassador to "just leave it" for now. Batagarawa promised to return to the Benue issue "later".

2. (C) Comment: Batagarawa claims not to have known of President Obasanjo's December 2002 letter to Senator Feingold until the Ambassador informed him of its existence. On several occasions since, Batagarawa has promised to provide the Ambassador with evidence of Obasanjo's claim to have taken punitive action against officers involved in the Benue incident. Batagarawa's subsequent refusal to discuss the issue lends credibility to previous Embassy and DAO Abuja reporting indicating any transfers/retirements were not punitive in nature, but rather were routine personnel actions. While Post cannot be certain, it is likely Batagarawa's promise of proof was an attempt to stall while he investigated the matter. Having found no evidence to support his President's claims, Batagarawa has decided to avoid discussing the issue.  
JETER